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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to determine the actual knowledge of, implementation of, and interest in individualized instruction, a two-year survey was recently completed, involving 284 public school classroom teachers with a degree in either elementary or secondary education from an accredited college or university. The following three survey instruments, designed as questionnaires, were administered: (1) "Unit Evaluation," INTRODUCTION TO INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION; (2) "HOW WELL IS INSTRUCTION BEING INDIVIDUALIZED"; and (3) "Interest Finder," INTRODUCTION TO INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION. Instrument 1 was used to assess teacher knowledge about individualized instruction. The questionnaire consisted of 30 vocabulary words, which the respondents were requested to define. Instrument 2 was used to assess the degree of classroom implementation of individualized instructional techniques by the teacher. Participants responded to various degrees of application of 20 descriptive classroom items including room organization, material usage, teaching strategies, and evaluation techniques. Instrument 3 was used to assess teacher interest in individualized instruction. The teachers were asked to select five topics about which they desired more information. The topics were selected from a list of classroom teaching methods. This survey revealed that classroom teachers are interested in using individualized instruction as a method of teaching and that teachers do desire leadership and direction in implementing this method. (MM)

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Individualized Instruction: Teacher Assessment

A Research Study

by

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Individualized Instruction: Teacher Assessment

Exhortations of individualized instruction as an effective method of classroom teaching are sounded repeatedly by educators at all levels. Books and articles are written, curriculum guides are developed, lectures are presented, and inservice training workshops are held which all emphasize teaching strategies to meet individual needs. However, criticism has been made that both teacher training institutions and public school administrative units are giving "lip service" only to this teaching methodology. Critics argue that most teachers in the public schools do not know "how" to individualize their teaching.

In an attempt to determine the actual knowledge of, implementation of, and interest in individualized instruction, a two year survey involving two hundred eighty-four (284) public school classroom teachers was recently completed.

Each participant in the study had completed either an elementary or secondary teacher education curriculum at an accredited college or university. A variety of teaching assignments was included in the survey in order to obtain a range of responses. Fourteen (14) different teacher training institutions were represented by the respondents.

Participants completed the following three survey instruments designed as questionnaires:

Instrument #1: "Unit Evaluation," INTRODUCTION TO INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION, Education Service Center Region XI, Ft. Worth, Texas

Instrument #2: HOW WELL IS INSTRUCTION BEING INDIVIDUALIZED, ICIM, Field Services Bureau, University of Texas at Austin

Instrument #3: "Interest Finder," INTRODUCTION TO INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION, Education Service Center, Region XI Ft. Worth, Texas

Four hundred (400) packets containing the above instruments were administered. Two hundred eighty-four (284) were completed accurately to be used in the survey. Elementary teacher responses were categorized as primary grades (1, 2, 3) and upper elementary (4, 5, and 6). Secondary teacher responses were organized by teaching areas: social science, mathematics, sciences, English, foreign languages. No attempt was made to restrict the study to teacher age, sex, or experience.

Instrument #1 above was used to assess teacher knowledge about individualized instruction. The questionnaire consisted of thirty vocabulary words. Respondents were requested to define the terms. Primary level classroom teachers correctly defined approximately 35% of the words. Upper elementary teachers, as a group, defined 28% of the terms. Secondary teachers correctly defined the terms as follows: social studies teachers, 15%; English teachers, 29%; teachers of mathematics, 22%; science teachers, 19%; teachers of foreign languages, 27%.

Instrument #2 above was used to assess the degree of classroom implementation of individualized instructional techniques by the teacher. Participants responded to various degrees of application of twenty (20) descriptive classroom items including room organization, material usage, teaching strategies, and evaluation techniques. Findings are summarized in Table I for both elementary and secondary teachers.

The final instrument (#3 above) was used to assess teacher interest in individualized instruction. The teachers were asked to select five topics about which they desired more information. The topics selected were from

the following list of ten:

Simulation and games
Team Teaching
Schoolwide organization for individualized instruction
Grouping
Student Assessment
Behavioral Objectives
Learning Packets
Independent Study
Programmed Units
Multi-media approach

Approximately 75% of the secondary teachers indicated interest in learning about individualized instruction in the areas of "team teaching," "grouping," and "learning packets." A somewhat smaller percentage indicated interest in "multi-media approach" and "programmed units." Elementary teachers rated interest in learning more about "student assessment," "simulation and games," and "multi-media approach." Only a small percentage showed any interest in "behavioral objectives" or "school wide organization for individualized instruction."

Analysis

An analysis for this assessment of individualized instruction produced these additional findings:

1. Some 80% of elementary classroom teachers use individualized instruction to some extent.
2. Primary grade teachers (1-3) rank highest in the utilization of individualized techniques.
3. Secondary teachers in the areas of math, English, and foreign language individualize their instruction to some extent.
4. Teachers of secondary social studies rank the lowest in using individualized instruction.
5. Approximately 75% of those surveyed showed a definite deficient knowledge of individualized instruction.

Implications

Results of this survey have certain implications for teacher educators at the university level and also for public school administrators responsible for staff development in the local schools.

For the teacher training institutions, units of study in individualized instruction should be included in both elementary and secondary education programs. Such study should involve intensive knowledge-based experiences as to the theory of individualization as well as implementation experiences in a simulated or real classroom situation.

A second implication is directed toward public school administrative personnel. Those individuals charged with the responsibilities for professional staff development should organize inservice sessions to provide teachers with information and assistance in order to utilize individualized instruction as a teaching technique. The inservice sessions could include workshops, demonstrations, visitations to model classes, and other practical experiences which could be directly applied to the classroom.

Conclusion

This survey revealed that classroom teachers are interested in using individualized instruction as a method of teaching and teachers do desire leadership and direction in implementing this method. Results of this study could be useful to educators at the university level as they revise present teacher training programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The results could also be considered by public school administrators who design inservice programs for staff development. Individual instruction may not be the panacea to all classroom teaching-learning situations but certainly deserves consideration as an important instructional tool.

TABLE I

Percentage of Individualized Teaching
*by 284 respondents

Categories of Teachers	Totally Individualized	Approximately 50% Individualized	Some Individualization	No Individuaiization
Elementary Upper Grades	12	30	48	10
Primary Grades	40	48	12	--
Secondary Social Studies	--	--	18	82
English	--	32	56	12
Mathematics	9	43	36	12
Science	--	14	46	40
Foreign Language	3	21	45	31

* Based on 20 descriptive items in "How Well is Instruction Being Individualized" by Coody and Harris, University of Texas at Austin, 1975.